

# Progress report

## Achieving structural changes as a result of actions implemented in GEPs

This document is deliverable D.3.2 “Progress report. Achieving structural changes as a result of actions implemented in GEPs”.

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A multi-stage assessment was carried out in the institutions to identify best practices for structural change. For this purpose, institution-specific questionnaires were developed, and focus group discussions conducted with relevant stakeholders in the institutions. The first interviews conducted by WP3 between February and April 2018 initiated a reflection on the existing structure within the institution, and the impact of the measures has been consciously assessed through this process. The final awarding and public presentation of highly effective gender equality measures as best practices further increased the visibility of the measures and underlined their legitimacy. In addition, the recognition empowered those in charge to push ahead with their efforts. The subsequently-developed recommendations are aimed at improving the best practices and the overall situation in the institution, and encouraging other institutions to implement appropriate best practices of their partners. These recommendations, as well as the follow-up-interviews conducted in May 2019 and between February and April 2020, advanced the already-initiated reflection process. This process, which has now lasted four years, can be understood as

- a) ongoing agenda-setting
- b) raising gender equality awareness within each institution
- c) establishing and/or strengthening relevant networks within the institution and beyond
- d) internal and external assessment and monitoring of own gender equality measures in particular, and the institution-specific gender equality policy in general
- e) mutual learning by making processes and structures of other institutions known, and providing recommendations for their adaption.

In the following report, we summarise our findings on structural changes as a result of actions implemented through GEPs, and present additional considerations. A comprehensive document, for internal use only, states in more detail how the institutions made use of the recommendations developed in Baltic Gender, to improve the best practices towards structural changes. That document also includes an assessment of the general situation in each institution during the last two years, especially regarding gender equality, to better understand the implementation process.

At the beginning of the project, half of the best practices identified in our eight partner institutions were already anchored in the GEP of the respective institution. Between the start of the project and the official assessment of the GEPs in 2019, KU, UT-EMI and Kiel University have adopted a new GEP or similar document. By doing so, two more best practices were anchored in written agreements. Nevertheless, although long-established measures such as the “Democratic pathways into decision-making boards”, the “Project-based course for students: StartIng!” or the “Gender mainstreaming in HR department” are not anchored in the respective institutional GEP, they operate successfully. The cases of long-established measures such as the awareness training “See the human beyond” and the re-entry financing after a career break “Come back to research” show that despite the (temporary) expiry of the GEP at IOW and Lund University, successful measures are being continued. The same is true for Kiel University, which has had no GEP in place since 2016, but “Indicator-based funding with performance indicators on gender equality” has nevertheless been used successfully, and other measures have been developed during this time. This leads us to the conclusion that the longer a measure is implemented, the more it is accepted and can work smoothly, even without a written agreement. The more people get used to a gender equality measure and know about it, the less a specific written agreement is needed. An intended structural change is thus transformed into a **cultural change**, which does not necessarily have to draw on written regulations, but lives from broad unquestioned consent. Anchoring in a GEP or similar is therefore not absolutely necessary for the lasting success of a measure. However, we recommend recording even a recognised measure in

important documents, so that successes achieved cannot be jeopardised by suddenly emerging resistance.

At the beginning of the Baltic Gender project, measures developed within third-party funded projects such as the “Postdoc project call” and the mentoring programme for female postdocs “via:mento\_ocean” that were not included in the last GEP and only anchored in the Cluster of Excellence “Future Ocean” have now expired. However, the new GEP of Kiel University, which was adopted at the end of June 2020, sets out the transfer and consolidation of these best practices as a defined goal, and specifies appropriate structures for doing so. As we can see from these examples, official documents like a GEP can foster the transfer of the successes achieved – but not sustainably financed – to other, longer-established structures. However, this transfer again leads to structural changes in the institution.

The past four years have also shown that **contextual knowledge** of the institution is needed for successful implementation of gender equality measures and GEPs. The history of an institution, existing lines of conflict, and relevant stakeholders should be known in detail, in order to initiate structural changes. The best practice brochure therefore presents all institutions with their specific profile, in order to facilitate any adaptations required to best practices. The recommendations for implementation also presented in the brochure are of such a fundamental character that they are transferable to all research institutions.

The knowledge of the institution’s history should be accompanied by the strategically sound use of any opportunities that may arise, in order to achieve the highest possible impact. Thus, the preparation of a new strategy paper, as in the case of Klaipeda University, represents an excellent opportunity to anchor gender equality aspects not only in the GEP, but also in other important documents of the university. Through the assessment of the situation at each institution related to the improvement of gender equality, we can state that some aspects favour or hinder progress in gender equality. These include in particular:

- A change in top management
- A change in the office of the person(s) responsible for gender equality
- A reduction or increase in gender equality resources
- The attitude of the top management and other key stakeholders in the institution (e.g. those who pursue or do not pursue the objective of gender equality).
- External drivers such as research funding agencies or gender equality awards.

By drawing on research findings and by analysing the GEPs of the Baltic Gender institutions, we have observed that GEPs are very comprehensive documents that contain principal objectives and measures, but they do not always include precise processes. Their primary aims are: a) describing and analysing the status quo, b) setting targets, c) monitoring the achievement of the targets using gender-sensitive indicators. Detailed structures and procedures of individual measures are often set out in other documents (such as guidelines or handbooks), or function on the basis of well-established but unwritten processes. GEPs therefore cannot be regarded as stand-alone documents, because they are usually accompanied by further agreements on specific measures. These documents must also be consulted to gain a comprehensive understanding of the GEP. In order to achieve the maximum impact, relevant gender equality stakeholders should be involved in the development of the GEP, and the persons responsible for the implementation (also of individual measures) should be recorded in



writing. The measures included in the GEP should also be advertised extensively, to ensure that the target group is aware of them.

As we have seen from our project experience, national legislation plays a major role in improving gender equality, and also in the role and function of the GEPs. If extensive regulations and offers already exist at a national level, it is not necessary for individual higher education institutions to develop and anchor basic policies and measures in their gender equality plans, such as childcare facilities or quotas. Institutions which have only recently begun to intensively tackle the topic of gender equality, and which are located in countries whose legal provisions predominantly include anti-discrimination laws but no regulations for the promotion of women, often begin their gender equality activities with topics like reconciling family and work in the GEPs.

Baltic Gender has a total of eight partner institutions, which differ in terms of their focus on marine sciences, size, funding and human resources, as well as their experience with gender equality. Despite these differences, it could be observed that almost all institutions have integrated the issue of **sexual violence and harassment** and related awareness training into their GEPs. In the last four years, detailed guidelines have been developed, complaint procedures introduced or improved, and counselling for those affected has been expanded, in almost every partner institution. Ensuring a safe, non-violent working environment is an ongoing issue, even for institutions with decades of gender equality experience and sophisticated gender equality measures. In light of the experience gained in the project, we consider it important and useful that each institution has written agreements on how to deal with sexual harassment, complaint procedures and an extensive range of counselling and support services for those affected. Kiel UAS and GEOMAR have made sexual harassment a core topic of their gender equality policy in the last two years. GEOMAR has offered a leaflet on dealing with sexual harassment since 2016, and has developed a new one specifically for research cruises in 2020. Due to the ongoing efforts on this issue and its legal framework, related structural changes have been made in most of the partner institutions.

Another issue that is constantly being addressed by both new and experienced institutions is the **underrepresentation of women in senior positions and on decision-making bodies**. Especially in the highest positions, such as professorships, progress is slow, and it is therefore necessary to constantly address this issue and develop measures in the coming years or even decades. Significant progress can only be made through the implementation of specific measures, such as gender quotas or the active recruitment of women.

The last aspect that stands out in the analysis of GEPs is: the more gender equality experience there is at an institution, the more sophisticated are the measures implemented. However, the analysis of institution-specific challenges and development of targeted measures requires human and financial resources, which must either be provided by the institution or the state, or financed by third parties. With the latter, there is always the risk that successes achieved cannot be continued. Nevertheless, it could be observed from the example of Baltic Gender and the SwafS Call that particularly funding from renowned and reputable third-party sources, such as from the Horizon 2020 programme, can also contribute to the goal of gender equality gaining higher **relevance and acceptance** in the institutions, raise overall awareness of gender equality, and ensure that it is regularly on the agenda.

